

Lander 12/2/2014 Public Meeting Comments

Group 1

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group process and recommendations

- Increase WT season
 - o Oct 1 → Oct 22 General
Added for Hunt Areas 92, 94, 160 (Oct. 1-Oct. 22 for Any White-tailed deer, Oct. 15 – Oct. 22 Antlered Mule Deer)
 - o Nov 1 → Nov 30 Limited Quota
Done. Restored HA 92, 94, 160 Type 3 and Type 8 license quotas to 2013 level (50 T3, 100 T8) Seasons will close Nov. 30 in Hunt Areas 92, 94, 97, 160.
- WT deer concerns
 - o *Private land access
We will continue to work with landowners to maintain/increase access to hunt white-tailed deer (WTD).
 - o Hunting pressure
With most WTD hunting on private lands, Limited Quota numbers will be recommended commensurate with access and WTD numbers.
 - o *Walk-in areas need to be increased
Will continue to work with landowners to maintain/increase access to hunt white-tailed deer (WTD).
- Youth hunt: archery can take any sex during special archery season
- **This was discussed on a statewide basis and the decision was made to continue allowing this opportunity. In many/most areas this has no impact at all and is only a very small fraction of the deer harvest.**
- WG process working well
Thank you, we feel it is going well too.
- Are all people covered/represented?
There is a wide variety of public representation, so we believe most folks are represented.
- In agreement to remove APR
Antler point restrictions were removed for Hunt Areas 92, 94, 160, 96, & 97 for 2015 season.

ATVs

We recognize these issues and are willing to assist BLM and US Forest Service personnel in figuring out ways to address them through Travel Management Plans. Actual enforcement is not an option for Game & Fish personnel except on Dept. managed or State Land Board lands. But we often report violations to appropriate agencies.

- People behavior not machine
- All motor vehicles off limits during hunting season in some areas
 - o Fine for infraction?
 - o Increase fines and/or confiscate
- Increased disturbance
- Road hunting vs recreational driving
- Off-roading or too many people driving
- Hunting off an ATV – ethics
- Making new roads
- Increase law enforcement
- Any law enforcement should be able to write an off-road ticket
- Public turn in off-roaders on anti-poaching hotline
 - o Make it hurt
- *Increase fine, second offense confiscate
- *Education

All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.

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Elk HA 28

- *Look at numbers; support antlerless if population can support it
Winter surveys are showing a dramatic increase in elk numbers in HA 28. We believe increasing cow harvest is needed to avoid overuse of winter range forage.
- Elk move
We believe most elk in HA 28 are available during hunting seasons, but sometimes elk have moved into HA 25, regardless of whether General licenses are good for ANY elk or BULLS only in HA 28.
- Going to have a type-6?
No. With change to ANY elk for part of the General License season, no need for additional cow/calf licenses. This was also removed in part from public comment in December meetings a couple of years ago. Also concern about weather in November making it hard to get to elk in some years.
- Week of no hunting between to calm elk down
Oct. 23 – Oct. 31 will remain a non-hunting period.

Group 2

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group process and recommendations

- Right on
Thank you, we feel it is going well too.
- Efforts are noticed

Thanks. Hopefully, the group will find ways to help mule deer and mule deer hunting.

- Great recommendations

Thanks. Those are only the beginning.

- Harvest regimes aren't growing deer

We are taking a hard look at all options (including the following issues) to improve mule deer populations, habitats, and hunting.

- o Moisture
- o Predation - learning more
- o *More monitoring of predators
- o *Competition from elk, WTD, and horses
- o Multiple species in decline throughout the west
- o *Other factors that we aren't addressing
- APR – different experience and success in other areas

Antler point restrictions were removed for Hunt Areas 92, 94, 160, 96, & 97 for 2015 season.

- WTD and mule deer tags should be separate
- **This has been discussed and in some areas this is the case. Individuals can have a general license as well as a Type 3 WTD license in areas with leftover Type 3s.**

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ATVs

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- *Proliferation of trails, creating new trails
- Keep animals in the area while providing access
- Assimilation of rules and regulations
- *Public education on WHY ATVs aren't/shouldn't be everywhere
- Legislative changes to enforcement for WGFD
- Bad apples/slob hunters
 - o Self policing
- **All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.**

Elk HA 28

We are proposing General license – ANY elk in Hunt Area 28 from Oct. 1 – 9, then ANTLERED (BULL) ONLY from Oct. 10 – 22.

- Lack of ability to kill wolves and the impact on elk
Following court ruling in Sept. 2014, we have no ability to deal with wolf interaction with elk anywhere in Wyoming. Impacts to elk in Lander area have been minimal thus far.
- *Plenty of elk – why not?
Winter surveys are showing a dramatic increase in elk numbers in HA 28. We believe increasing cow harvest is needed to avoid overuse of winter range forage.
- *How will it affect surrounding areas?
No change was noticed in prior ANY elk general season in HA 28. Elk occasionally cross into HA 25 in October regardless of whether hunting bulls only or any elk in HA 28.
- Increase bull quality with any elk
We agree, this was also reported to us by a number of hunters.
- No opposition from group
- More folks go for elk leave deer alone
Since the part of the ANY elk season will not overlap deer season, this may be a minimal benefit.
- More traditional archery options
With the whole month of September available for Special Archery, plus Archery equipment may be used during regular (General or Limited Quota) seasons, there is ample archery opportunity.

Group 3

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group process and recommendations

- Process is working
Thank you, we feel it is going well too.
- Youth impact on does – what does data show?
Only 29 does harvested with Firearm in South Wind River MD Herd and 6 harvested with Firearm in Sweetwater MD. Youth would be the only hunters allowed to harvest does with firearm, so impact is low.
- - Hunter recruitment – will restricting youth hunters impact this?
Yes. This is why youth hunters were allowed to harvest ANY deer instead of just antlered deer.
 - Youth only doe/fawn tag as option
Currently there isn't a way to do this.
 - Youth only hunt is good!

Thank you. We believe this is a very useful tool to help kids become interested in hunting – especially giving extra days/weekends for them to hunt & avoid conflicts with school and other activities.

- WT season
 - o Take pressure off mule deer
This is possible, but probably won't result in noticeable changes to the number of mule deer hunters.
 - o Good opportunity to fill tag
More opportunity for a prolific species should be good.
 - o Plan makes sense
Thanks. We are hoping these changes will help mule deer and provide additional opportunity for hunters.
- In favor of removing APRs
Antler point restrictions were removed for Hunt Areas 92, 94, 160, 96, & 97 for 2015 season.

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ATVs

We recognize these issues and are willing to assist BLM and US Forest Service personnel in figuring out ways to address them through Travel Management Plans. Actual enforcement is not an option for Game & Fish personnel except on Dept. managed or State Land Board lands. But we often report violations to appropriate agencies.

- *More enforcement needed – speed
- WT extended season could reduce traffic
- Need to be very careful about closing more roads
- *Public outreach and education
 - o Protect habitat
 - o ATV habitat stamp/fee
 - o Info/ethics course (online) for ORV users
- *Closures impact predator control
- No human presence vs road closures
 - o Does foot traffic have a big impact?
- Definition of a closure – types of restrictions
All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.

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Elk HA 28

- If biology supports it, okay
Winter surveys are showing a dramatic increase in elk numbers in HA 28. We believe increasing cow harvest is needed to avoid overuse of winter range forage.

- Wolf predation could reduce elk numbers
Not something we can do anything about for now.
- Offers more opportunity
We agree. And it should reduce pressure on bulls, helping improve “quality” of bulls into the future.

Other Comments

- August 15th bear hunt vs Sept for archery
The current fall black bear season structure was implemented due to public input concerned about closing the seasons with August archery hunting in the late-2000s. Most hunters wanted the opportunity to hunt elk and bear at the same time (thus the change to Sept. 1 opening date). Fall harvest limit was also increased to 5 females (only 2 females & 2 males harvested in Fall 2014).
- Deer – extend archery season to start of rifle season
The statewide archery seasons end on Sept 30 unless a regular season starts in September. Then the archery season closes the day prior to the regular season opening date.
- Bounty on predators
WGFD has no authority over predators – Funding would be an issue for WGFD to conduct as well.

Group 4

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group process and recommendations

- Process takes a long time
Yes, but we don’t want to rush into things and make “wrong” decisions.
- Good discussions
- Everyone has a say
- More info has helped change outlook and make more informed decisions
This is one of the best parts of having a public working group help make these decisions.
- Short-term WT
 - o Love to hunt mule deer, but rather eat WT
 - o Make WT tag whole month of Oct.
We are recommending General License season Oct. 1 – Oct. 22 for any white-tailed deer in Hunt Areas 92, 94, and 160. Oct 15 – Oct. 22 will be also open for Antlered Mule Deer. Due to potential conflicts with elk seasons, and lower numbers of white-tailed deer in Jeffrey City, we chose not to add to the General License season in Hunt Areas 96 & 97. We feel we should provide the last week of October as a “rest buffer” for hunting, then Type 3 and Type 8 White-tailed deer seasons will be open for the entire month of November in

Hunt Areas 92, 94, & 160 in Lander area, also in Hunt Area 97 near Jeffrey City.

- Generally like the idea of WT management

Thanks. We are hoping these changes will help mule deer and provide additional opportunity for hunters.

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- Fully support restricting youth to same rules as everyone else
- **This was discussed on a statewide basis and the decision was made to continue allowing this opportunity. In many/most areas this has no impact at all and is only a very small fraction of the deer harvest.**
- Short-term APR
We planned on APRs for 2 years and added a 3rd year to allow for formation of this Mule Deer working group to make long-term recommendations.
- Group supports removing restriction
Antler point restrictions were removed for Hunt Areas 92, 94, 160, 96, & 97 for 2015 season.

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ATVs

We recognize these issues and are willing to assist BLM and US Forest Service personnel in figuring out ways to address them through Travel Management Plans. Actual enforcement is not an option for Game & Fish personnel except on Dept. managed or State Land Board lands. But we often report violations to appropriate agencies.

- HA 28 Limestone Rd to Wild Iris access to closed trail-hiking area for climbers- ATVs use it very hard to physically close
- *Need enforcement presence if there are going to be closures, otherwise why bother?
- Pioneered roads become full roads quickly, often people don't know if they're legal roads or not
- **All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.**

Elk HA 28

- **We chose to initiate ANY elk season for only the first 9 days of October then Antlered Only for remainder of 2015 season. This will give us a chance to gauge support and hunter numbers/crowding problems before opening entire season to ANY elk. The following comments will be addressed as we analyze how the 2015 ANY elk season works or doesn't work.**
- More hunters and more ATVs, more crowding

- Hunter concentrate in areas where access is easy
- Enforcement more difficult for USFS
- Some support for any elk season what about offering any elk season for youth hunters only?

Youth are already allowed to hunt for ANY elk in HA 28 General license (as well as other areas that would be open only for antlered elk)

- Separate any elk and bull only seasons – maybe first week or two any elk, then bulls only
We are proposing Oct. 1 -9 ANY elk , Oct 10 – 22 Antlered Only. This would provide one weekend of ANY elk and 2 weekends of Antlered elk hunting.

Other Comments

- Please continue public info gathering meetings. It's a good process
Thanks. We think so too, but will not work without continued involvement from the public.
- MD working group appears to have gel-ed and works well together. Good presentation
Thanks.
- Lander is great at bringing the public in and listening to public concerns.
Thanks. We just wish our meetings were better attended so we could reach more people at the same time.

Group 5

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group process and recommendations

- *Well done
Thank you, we feel it is going well too
- Like the process
- Likes extended WT season
 - o Education – WTD or MD or cross
Yes, but with WTD numbers still being low in the Lander area, this isn't really a big concern for now.
 - o Support season to Nov 30
We extended the Type 3 and Type 8 WTD seasons to November 30 in our initial season recommendations.
 - o *Access issues to WT on private land?
We will continue to work with landowners to maintain/increase access to hunt white-tailed deer (WTD).
 - o
- Support no does for youth season
This was discussed on a statewide basis and the decision was made to continue allowing this opportunity. In many/most areas this has no impact at all and is only a very small fraction of the deer harvest.

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ATVs

We recognize these issues and are willing to assist BLM and US Forest Service personnel in figuring out ways to address them through Travel Management Plans. Actual enforcement is not an option for Game & Fish personnel except on Dept. managed or State Land Board lands. But we often report violations to appropriate agencies.

- Outside funding for increased law enforcement and agency presence (RMEF?)
- Access for elderly and disabled/restrict by age
- Recognize we have a spring horn hunting season to patrol
 - o Plates on all vehicles?
- Decrease full sized vehicle use/gates
- *More/existing staffing to enforce regulations
- Redirect funds/direction within agency
- Education
- Grassroots organization
- *Red shirt – Green shirt patrol → coordination between agencies

All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.

Elk HA 28

- *Support general and add a Type-1 that changes to antlerless later if unused
We want to try just making the General License being valid for ANY elk Oct. 1 – 9 before we move forward with another license type overlapping the General season in Hunt Area 28.
- *Concerned with hunter crowding
We chose to initiate ANY elk season for only the first 9 days of October then Antlered Only for remainder of 2015 season. This will give us a chance to gauge support and hunter numbers/crowding problems before opening entire season to ANY elk.
- Easier to enforce?
Not really, but it does reduce waste of “accidental” harvest of antlerless elk during Antlered only season.

Other Comment

- Choose your weapon
This has come up often in many areas, but there isn’t statewide support to do this.
- Address roadkills/nighttime speed limits?
We are working with WYDOT to address this issue, especially in zones where wildlife/vehicle collisions are frequent.
 - o Better documentation of roadkills

WYDOT and WGFD are working with the Teton Science School to improve the roadkill database. The hardest part of this is tracking the animals hit on roads that don't die where we see them. Possibly 2 -3 x the number we document die away from roads.